

## THE FAIRFAX AREA AGENCY ON AGING PRESENTS CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE JANUARY 2006

"Caregiver's Corner Online" is an electronic newsletter produced by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) with funding from the National Family Caregiver Support Program of the Older Americans Act. Our goal is to send you information to support you as a family caregiver for an older adult.

### IN THIS EDITION:

1. Setting Goals for a Stroke Survivor from the Caregiver's Perspective
2. Nutrition Classes Offered Through Inova Health Source
3. Previous Editions of "Caregiver's Corner Online" are Available

#### **1. SETTING GOALS FOR A STROKE SURVIVOR FROM THE CAREGIVER'S**

**PERSPECTIVE by Stephanie Mensh.** When my husband, Paul Berger, suffered a stroke from a ruptured aneurysm, our lives suddenly changed forever. Our plans, goals, and dreams as individuals and as a couple came to a lurching stop. We were always positive, future-thinking people, and applied this attitude toward our new challenge--overcoming Paul's speech, language, and physical disabilities resulting from his stroke. We had plans to continue traveling...we had a goal to buy a new house...and we had dreams of a happy, fulfilling, and long life together. Here are my five tips for caregivers to set goals for your survivor and yourself:

--Don't say no, say how. We did not see Paul's stroke as a dead end. Instead, as his caregiver, I looked for creative ways to emphasize his strengths, and work around his disabilities. For example, Paul's aphasia makes communication difficult, especially on the phone. With a lot of repetition, Paul can learn new phrases. One of the most helpful phrases that I taught him to say was, "Excuse me, I had a stroke." This lets the other person know they might have to be a little more patient.

--Independence is key. The most important goal--for Paul, for me as his caregiver, and for our relationship was to make Paul as independent as possible. The more independent Paul became, the more time and energy I had for other activities. Paul's increasing independence also enhanced his self-esteem. All of these efforts helped our relationship as a couple.

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--Make short-term plans fit the big picture. Paul's aphasia and right-sided paralysis left him unable to care for himself. Working with his therapists, we established short-term goals and plans for Paul's rehabilitation and my role as his caregiver that would help move us toward our longer-term personal goals. Our goals included:

- Goal 1: Paul taking care of himself
- Goal 2: Paul helping around the house
- Goal 3: Getting out together
- Goal 4: Getting out alone.

--Hire others to help. I was only 32 when Paul had his stroke, and I had a career that I did not want to leave. Early in Paul's recovery, when he needed full-time assistance, I hired a companion to drive him to his therapy appointments, help with his home physical therapy exercises and speech homework, run errands for us, and take him to the mall or a park during the day. When I came home from work, we could share the evening together as a couple and see friends on the weekend.

--Celebrate. When you achieve one of your goals, and are ready to start on the next, remember to celebrate the accomplishments, no matter how small or large. Stroke survivors and their caregivers--as do so many busy people these days--often become overwhelmed by their day-to-day activities and forget to take some time out to enjoy each other. Remember to celebrate the caregiver's achievements, too. Cards, flowers, a small gift, or a special meal at home or at a favorite restaurant can mark your progress.

If you are a stroke survivor or a caregiver, visit the "Stroke Survivor" Web site at [www.StrokeSurvivor.com](http://www.StrokeSurvivor.com). In addition, the Fairfax County Health Department sponsors several stroke and aphasia groups in the Vienna and Mt. Vernon areas. Visit the Web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/speechstroke.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/speechstroke.htm), or call Shannon Kelly, 703-246-7120.

Source: Thanks to Stephanie Mensh for allowing the reprint of her article. She is the coauthor of "How to Conquer the World with One Hand...And An Attitude" (Copyright (c) Paul E. Berger & Stephanie Mensh). Stephanie Mensh is a speaker and author. To find out more about her programs and services, please visit [www.StrokeSurvivor.com](http://www.StrokeSurvivor.com) or call 703-241-2375.

**2. NUTRITION CLASSES OFFERED THROUGH INOVA HEALTH SOURCE.** If your New Year's resolution focused on better nutrition for you or your loved one, here are some classes that may be of interest. Classes are taught by a Registered Dietician through Inova Health Source. For information and to register, please call 703-204-3366, TTY: 703-204-3329 or visit the Web site at [www.inova.com/inovapublic.srt/healthinfo/Winter2006.pdf](http://www.inova.com/inovapublic.srt/healthinfo/Winter2006.pdf).

# THE FAIRFAX AREA AGENCY ON AGING PRESENTS CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE JANUARY 2006

--"Be My Valentine: Heart to Heart"

Learn heart-healthy eating strategies and basic sources of fat and cholesterol to avoid.

\*\*February 14, 2006 at 10:00, Merrifield (60 minute session--\$20 per session).

--"Dealing with Dairy: The Low-Down on Lactose Intolerance" (New!)

Learn what foods to avoid if you have lactose intolerance, how to meet your individual calcium needs, and what dairy foods you may still be able to enjoy.

\*\*February 9, 2006 at 10:30 a.m., Fairfax (60 minute session--\$20 per session).

\*\*March 8, 2006 at 7:00 p.m., Alexandria (60 minute session--\$20 per session).

**3. PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF "CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE" NEWSLETTER ARE NOW AVAILABLE.** Current and past editions of the "Caregiver's Corner Online" newsletter are available online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/caregivers\\_corner\\_nl.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/caregivers_corner_nl.htm).

Please note that these items are included for informational purposes only and do not imply endorsement by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging or Fairfax County Government.

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For further information, please contact an Aging Information Specialist at the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (telephone: 703-324-7948; TTY 703-449-1186 or e-mail: [fairfax\\_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:fairfax_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov)). Visit our website at: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa).

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